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COMMON ERRORS

IN

SPEAKING AND WRITING.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE.

65213

BY

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"Who can tell how much of his own good or ill success, how much of the favour or disregard with which he himself has been treated, may have depended upon that skill or deficiency in grammar, of which, as often as he has either spoken or written, he must have afforded a certain and constant evidence."—*Goold Brown.*

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COMMON ERRORS

IN

SPEAKING AND WRITING.

Of all the gifts which God has bestowed upon man, there is none which, considered in reference to the importance of its results, can be compared with language.

Without it, man would have been unable to comprehend a verbal expression of the will of his Creator, and would have had no guide but the promptings of instinct. And as he would have been incapable of receiving any new ideas, so also would he have been incapable of imparting any. Even had he been able, by the force of abstract reasoning, to evolve new ideas out of his own mind, he would have had no means of communicating them to his contemporaries, much less of bequeathing them to posterity. There could, therefore, have been no progress in knowledge, either human or divine; and from generation to generation the mind of man would have lain fallow.

Nor would the superiority of his intellect have added to his happiness. On the contrary, without the possession of language, the superiority of his intellect would have served only to fill his soul with yearning fruitless desires for closer intercourse and communion with his fellow-men, and with futile aspirations after the unknown. And as he would have been supreme in unutterable longings, so also

would he have been supreme in wretchedness. His hopes, desires, and aspirations, having no adequate power of expression, could have drawn forth no sympathy; his griefs and regrets, being locked up in the solitude of his own heart, could have received no alleviation; and his purest joys would have been barren of that sweetest of all delights, the rapture of sharing them with another.

We think too little of this gift, and give too little time and attention to the improvement of it. Yet he who, besides possessing a loving heart and a powerful and cultivated intellect, has the widest and most eloquent command of language, will always have the greatest influence for good over his fellow-men. If this is, as I firmly believe it to be, an indisputable fact, you will unhesitatingly pardon me for pressing it upon your careful consideration.

Grammatical criticisms are, I am well aware, very uninteresting to most persons, and are extremely difficult to make absorbingly interesting to any one. The subject has neither the attraction of novelty nor the charm of that which is antiquated. Whatever is novel respecting language requires the sanction of usage before it can become valuable; and whatever is antiquated in it is condemned as obsolete.

I feel, therefore, that I need your special indulgence while, for a short time, I direct your attention to certain popular errors in English.

Beginning with the indefinite article "*a*" or "*an*," I ask, what is more common in print than to find the latter word used rather than the former whenever it has to precede such a word as "*European*," or "*universal?*"

Until very recently, 'The Times' invariably put

"*an*", instead of "*a*", before all words beginning with a vowel. Latterly it has shown signs of a change in this respect; and I do not doubt that soon the error will be banished from the pages of that most accurate paper. In the copy published on the 15th of this month,[1] mention is made of "*a* university," and "*a* "universal bishop." This is certainly an improvement.

It seems to be the opinion of those who write "*an* "university," "*an* European war," "*an* oneness of "sentiment," etc., that the only rule to be followed in this matter is that we must always employ "*an*" before a word beginning with a vowel or with "*h*" mute, and "*a*" before a word beginning with a consonant. I would ask those writers what they imagine to be the reason for the change from "*a*" to "*an*," or from "*an*" to "*a*." Surely the fact that such expressions as those which I have instanced are never heard in conversation, might have taught the lesson that the question whether we should use "*a*" or should use "*an*" in any particular sentence must be determined solely by euphony. Even those persons themselves, who write thus incorrectly, would never speak so. They would never talk to you of "*an* one "pound note;" and why? Because, in speaking, they are guided by the ear, and guided correctly; whereas, in writing, they are guided by the eye, and consequently are led into error.

The expression "such *an* one," or "*an* one pound "note," is as incorrect as would be the expression "*an* "wonderful person." If "*one*" had the sound of the first syllable in "*only*" (which word is really "*one-ly*"), then, of course, it would require "*an*"

[1] February, 1875.

before it, as in the case of the expression "*an only* "son;" but as "*one*" is pronounced as if spelled with a "*w*" before it, it must be preceded by "*a*."

An equally common error is the using of the compound word "*an*other" instead of "*the* other." For example, Archbishop Trench says, in his admirable work 'English Past and Present,' "when you "compare two of these dictionaries with one *an*other," etc. But "*an*other" is indefinite; whereas nothing could be more definite than the comparing of two things, each with the other. Therefore, he ought not to have spoken of comparing them with one *an*other, or one with *an*other, but of comparing one with *the* other.

Again, the Archbishop says, "We see how closely "the words approach one *an*other," which is an expression that would be allowable if used concerning more than two words; but is wholly inadmissible when used, as he has used it, respecting two only; because, if two things approach each other, each approaches *the* other. In all such cases, the definite article, not the indefinite, should be used.

This error is of frequent occurrence in our English Bible. Two examples will be sufficient. In Genesis xxxi. 49 we read, "The Lord watch between me and "thee when we are absent one from *an*other." And in Daniel v. 6, we read that Belshazzar's knees smote "one against *an*other;" and yet, I suppose, he had but two.

That the English translators of the Bible well knew the difference between "*an*" and "*the*" is evident from Ezekiel vii. 2, where it is said, "*An* end, *the* "end is come!"

The difference between the definite article and the indefinite was never more clearly pointed out than it was by Charles James Fox when, contrasting his own command of language with the superior command possessed by Pitt, he said, "I never want *a* word, but "Pitt never wants *the* word."

With regard to the word "*other*," what strange nonsense its omission from a sentence sometimes makes of what is written. For instance, notice the absurdity in the following passage taken from Numbers xii. 3. "Now the man Moses was very "meek, above all the men which were upon the face "of the earth." Upon which statement we may remark that if it was so, then he was meeker than himself. Of Solomon, too, it is said, in 1 Kings iv. 31, that he was "wiser than all men;" therefore, wiser than himself, for the expression "*all men*" would certainly include him.

The error occurs in the New Testament also. In Mark iv. 31, it is said of a grain of mustard seed that, "when it is sown in the earth, it is less than all the "seeds that be in the earth," therefore, less than itself, of course.

The translators should have said that Moses was meek above all *other* men; that Solomon was wiser than all *other* men; and that the mustard seed is less than all *other* seeds.

As some writers err by omitting the word "*other*," so some err in their use of it. Henry H. Breen, the author of that excellent work of criticism, 'Modern English,' makes a singular mistake in his use of it in a certain passage in that work. He there says, "In "regard to mere length of sentences, Wilson and all

"other writers are surpassed by Hazlitt." It is evident that if Wilson and *all other* writers are surpassed by Hazlitt, then Hazlitt himself (being of necessity included in the phrase, "all other writers," *i.e.*, other than Wilson,) is surpassed by himself.

The expression "*of all others*" must not pass without a word of censure. In 'The Times' of October 22nd, 1874, there is a leading article on the reported capture of Nana Sahib, of whose atrocities the writer thus speaks: "The crime of Cawnpore marked him "out as the one man *of all others* on whom vengeance "ought to have been inflicted with exemplary seve-"rity." But how can one man be another man? One man can be *above* all others, but he cannot be *of* all *others*, nor *of any others*. The words contradict themselves; "*of*" is *in*clusive; "*others*" is *ex*clusive; hence the incongruity; for how can a man be at the same time both *in*cluded and *ex*cluded from a given category? How can a man be "*of* all *others?*"

Obvious as is this error to any reflective person, it is nevertheless a very common one, even among writers on language. I have in my possession a little work by F. Vesey, entitled 'The Decline of the English Language,' and the error occurs in a quotation on the very title page!

"*Other*" is frequently followed by "*but*" when it ought to be followed by "*than.*" Professor Bain, for instance, says in an article in the 'Fortnightly Review,' No. lxix. p. 211, "When you are sufficiently matured for the enjoyment of poetry of any kind, "you will take delight in reading Chaucer for yourself, "with no *other* aid *but* the notes of the learned editor."

The professor should have said either "with *no aid* "*but* the notes," or "with *no other aid than* the notes."

In Gen. xxviii. 17, we read, "This is none *other but* "the house of God." It should be "*other than.*"

The word "*other*" is redundant in the expression, "I had no other alternative," because it is embodied in the word "*alternative.*" To use that expression is equivalent to saying, "I had no *other other* choice."

Closely related to the word "*other,*" is the word "*either.*" This, which means one of two, is very erroneously used sometimes to signify "*each,*" or "*both.*" For example, in Rev. xxii. 2, it is said, "On "*either* side of the river was there the tree of life." In Lev. x. 1, we are told that "Nadab and Abihu, "took *either* of them his censer, and put fire therein." And in John xix. 18, it is said that "They crucified "Jesus and two other with him, on *either* side one, "and Jesus in the midst." In all such sentences, the word "*either*" should be "*each.*" "On *each* "side of the river," etc.

Reverting to the word "*but,*" I remark that its redundant use is very common; and, strangely enough, makes the speaker say just the reverse of that which he intended to say. In 'English Past and Present,' fourth edition, p. 177, Archbishop Trench says, "Words that have changed their meaning have often "a deceivableness about them, so that a man never "doubts *but* that he knows their intention. . . . . "when indeed it is altogether otherwise." Now, as the meaning of "*but,*" as here used, is "*except,*" the Archbishop really excludes from a man's belief the very thing of which he affirms that the man is confident! As I said, the redundant use of the word

"*but*" makes the speaker say the exact reverse of that which he intended. Omit from the quotation the word "*but*," and all is clear. It will then read thus: "Words that have changed their meaning, "have often a deceivableness about them, so that a "man never doubts [but] that he knows their inten- "tion. . . . . when indeed it is altogether otherwise." The Archbishop has said, "a man never doubts *but* "that he knows;" which is equivalent to saying that he *does* doubt that circumstance.

The error occurs in the book of Job also, chapter xii. verse 2, where, with bitter irony, Job says, "No "doubt *but* ye are the people, and wisdom shall die "with you."

However, perhaps the Archbishop used the word "*doubt*" in the sense of its very opposite, "*belief*." Strange as it may seem, this is no uncommon error. In an introduction to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, p. 39, a writer says, "I *doubt* that his partiality for "his author has carried him too far." Obviously, from the context, the meaning is, "I *believe* that his par- "tiality for his author has carried him too far."

The frequency of the habit of saying the reverse of that which is intended is very remarkable. Persons say of perfunctory service, "He evidently did not do "more than he could help;" but they mean that he did not do more than he could *not* help. The most common form of the error is the using of two negatives; such as, "It won't rain, I don't think," though the speaker means that he *does* think it will not rain. But I need not now refer to any such errors.

The use of "*no*" for "*not*" is of frequent occurrence. Archbishop Trench says in 'English Past

and Present,' "Hardly knowing whether they shall "become such or *no*." In Exodus, too, xvi. 4, we read, "That I may prove them whether they will walk in "my law or *no*." In the New Testament, also, the same error is found. For instance, in Luke xx. 22, it is asked, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar "or *no?*" *i.e.*, "Is it lawful or *no lawful?*" In each of the foregoing passages, the "*no*" should be "*not*." "Is it lawful or *not?*" etc.

The consideration of the word "*no*" naturally leads us to that of the word "*none*," which is compounded of "*no*" and "*one*." The word in both its forms is found in Isaiah xxxiv. 16: "Seek ye out the "book of the Lord, and read; *no one* of these shall "fail, *none* shall want her mate." It is evidently singular, yet it is often used as if it were plural. Persons say, "There *are* none;" "None *have* come."

In 1 Kings x. 21, we read, "All the drinking "vessels were of gold, none *were* of silver." It should be, "None [*i.e.*, no one] *was* of silver."

In the phrase "*each one*," the word "*one*" is redundant, because "*each*" means "*every one*." This error is of common occurrence both in ordinary conversation and likewise in the Bible.

So, too, in the phrases "*both of them*," and "*all of "them*," the words "*of them*" are redundant, or something worse; for the words "*both*" and "*all*" mean the whole, whereas the words "*of them*" mean a part only.

The erroneousness of the expression, "*I had rather*," has often been exposed. David is represented as saying in Psalm lxxxiv. 10, "I had rather be a door-"keeper in the house of my God." But until it be

shown that it is correct to say, "*I had be*," we must contend that it is incorrect to say "*I had rather be*," for the adverb cannot affect the correctness or the incorrectness of the verb to which it is joined.

Equally incorrect is it to say, "*I had sooner*." Yet in the 'Saturday Review,' No. 694, p. 220, we find this expression, "*We had sooner* read a book of Archbishop Trench's."

The error has, doubtless, arisen from the abbreviation of "*I would rather*," "*I would sooner*," into "*I'd rather*," "*I'd sooner;*" and then the origin of the abbreviation has been supposed to be "*I had*," instead of "*I would*."

The word "*rather*," like many other adverbs, is often misplaced. It is so in the following sentence in Archbishop Trench's 'English Past and Present:' "It rather modified the structure of our sentences "than the elements of our vocabulary." Trench should have said, not "*It rather modified*," but "It modified "the structure of our sentences *rather than* the elements of our vocabulary."

I hope that I shall not be thought to be unduly severe upon Archbishop Trench; but really there are, in his writings, some of the strangest errors in language that are to be found in the works of any English scholar. The information which he gives respecting our mother tongue is most valuable; but the language itself in which that information is given is most faulty. Here is an odd sentence of his: "The "process of *throwing* the accent of a word *back* . . . "is one which we may note constantly *going forward*."

Is the strangeness of such a sentence to be accounted for by the fact that Trench is an *Irish* Arch-

bishop? Probably not; for here is a similar sentence from a pamphlet issued in connection with a scheme of an *English* archbishop: "*Over and above* the mission "work going on in this house, a whole family lives "*in the underground kitchen.*"

In justification of my exposure of errors in our English translation of the Scriptures, allow me to say that I expose them because that version has been spoken of, by several eminent authorities on the language, as a standard of excellence in composition. For instance, Dr. Lowth says, "*The present transla-* "*tion of the Scriptures is the best standard of the English* "*language;*" and Lindley Murray says, "*The Bible,* "*for the size of it, is the most accurate grammatical* "*composition in the English language;*" and, influenced by these authorities, many persons have attempted to justify their own errors in language by pointing out similar objectionable expressions in the Scriptures. It is, I say, for this reason that I expose them; and I hope, but it is almost against hope, that none of them will re-appear in the revised edition that is now in course of preparation. That those who are engaged in the work are able Greek and Hebrew scholars is unquestionable; but that is not enough. Long ago Dryden remarked that "*there are many who* "*understand the dead languages, and yet are ignorant* "*of their mother tongue, the proprieties and delicacies* "*of which are known to few.*" Still, I trust that the following errors will be removed:—

Here are some specimens of redundancy. The first is from Gen. ii. 17. "*Of* the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat "*of it.*"

"He restored the chief butler unto his butlership "*again*." Gen. xl. 21.

"Whosoever toucheth the *dead* body of any man "that is *dead*." Num. xix. 13.

"The *most* strai*test* sect." Acts xxvi. 5.

Here is a very unseemly play upon words: "Rachael had *stolen* the images that were her father's; "and Jacob *stole* away." Gen. xxxi. 19, 20.

So also in Isaiah l. 5, 6, we read, "I was not "rebellious, neither turned away *back*. I gave my "*back* to the smiters."

We usually consider that the word "*this*" refers to something *here*, and the word "*there*" to a place that is *distant;* yet we read in Numbers xx. 4, "Why, "have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord "into *this* wilderness that we and our cattle should "die *there?*"

Here is a strange sentence: "Let us make a "covenant, *I* and *thou*." Gen. xxxi. 44. Let *I* make it!

Perhaps the most frequently occurring error in the Bible, and at the same time one of the most obvious, is that of a verb in the singular having a nominative in the plural. One instance of this is to be found in a sentence which I can safely affirm is repeated millions of times a day by English speaking people all over the globe. It occurs in the Lord's Prayer, and is as follows: "Thine *is* the kingdom, and the power, and "the glory." Which is equivalent to saying, "They *is* thine!" Is it not marvellous that educated Englishmen can utter that prayer day after day without perhaps one in ten thousand ever stumbling at this gross error in grammar?

Here are other passages containing similar errors:

"Thy silver *and* thy gold *is* mine." 1 Kings xx. 3.

"Where *is* the king of Hamath, *and* the king of "Arpad, *and* the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of "Hena, *and* Ivah?" 2 Kings xix. 13.

"His power *and* His wrath *is* against all them that "forsake Him." Ezra viii. 22.

"The preparations of the heart *and* the answer of "the tongue *is* from the Lord." Prov. xvi. 1.

"Before ME continually *is* grief *and* wounds." Jer. vi. 7.

"The ark wherein *was* the golden pot that had "manna, *and* Aaron's rod that budded, *and* the "tables of the covenant." Heb. ix. 4.

"*A* fading flower which *are* on the head of the fat "valleys." Isaiah xxviii. 1.

"There *was* written therein lamentations, *and* "mourning, *and* woe." Ezek. ii. 10.

Let it not be supposed that, in the foregoing instances of errors in the use of the verb "*to be*," the errors are owing to too close a fidelity to the originals of the Sacred Text. The errors are unquestionably those of the translators; for, if you turn to the various passages in the Bible, you will find that in every instance the verb is printed in Italics, showing that there is no word corresponding to it in the original. But even if there were, and if, in the originals, a noun in the plural were found to be followed by a verb in the singular, that circumstance would not justify the translators in giving us sentences so ungrammatical as those which I have quoted, or as those which follow:—

"The flax *and* the barley *was* smitten." Ex. ix. 31.

"This *and* that man *was* born in her." Psalm lxxxvii. 5.

"Fear *and* a snare *is* come upon us." Lam. iii. 47.

"Violence *and* spoil *is* heard in her." Jer. vi. 7.

"My strength *and* my hope *is* perished." Lam. iii. 18.

"Light *and* understanding *and* wisdom *was* found "in him." Daniel v. 11.

"There *was* given him dominion *and* glory *and* a "kingdom." Daniel vii. 14.

"Every man with whom *was* found blue, *and* "purple, *and* scarlet, *and* fine linen, etc." Exodus xxxv. 23.

As the errors which I have adduced respecting the disagreement between the nominative and the verb are all errors in the use of the verb "*to be*," you may perhaps think that there are no others. Would that there were not, but I find the following:—

"Out of His mouth come*th* knowledge *and* under- "standing." Prov. ii. 6.

"When distress *and* anguish come*th*." Prov. i. 27.

"Thy wisdom *and* prosperity exceed*eth*." 1 Kings x. 7.

"My flesh *and* my heart faile*th*." Psalm lxxiii. 26.

"My heart *and* my flesh cri*eth* out." Psalm lxxxiv. 2.

"Mine anger *and* my fury *hath* been poured forth." Jer. xlii. 18.

"Out of the mouth of The Most High proceed*eth* "not evil *and* good." Lam. iii. 38.

"The vine, *and* the fig tree, *and* the pomegranate, "*and* the olive tree *hath* not brought forth." Hag. ii. 19.

"Moth *and* rust *doth* corrupt." Matt. vi. 19.

"Out of the same mouth proceed*eth* blessing *and* "cursing." James iii. 10.

A noun of multitude may, of course, be either singular or plural, according as it is intended to convey an idea of unity or one of plurality; but it should not be used in both senses in the same passage, as it is in the following quotations:—

"This people refus*eth* the waters of Shiloah, and "rejoic*e* in Rezin." Isaiah viii. 6.

"The host of the Midianites *were*," and "the host "of Midian *was*." Judges vii. 1, 8.

"The people that *were* in the fields," and "the "people that *was* in the city." Judges ix. 44, 45.

"Blessed *is* the people that *know* the joyful sound." Psalm lxxxix. 15.

"My people *hath* forgotten Me, *they have* burned "incense." Jer. xviii. 15.

"*All* the people that dwell*eth* in this city." Jer. xxix. 16.

"My people *hath* been lost sheep, *their* shepherds "have caused *them* to go astray." Jer. l. 6.

"This people draw*eth* nigh to Me with *their* "mouth, and honour*eth* Me with *their* lips." Matt. xv. 8.

"This people who know*eth* not the law *are* cursed." John vii. 49.

"There *is* a generation that *are* pure in *their* own "eyes, and yet *is* not washed from *their* filthiness." Prov. xxx. 12.

The words "*each*" and "*every*" are singular, referring to one only; yet such sentences as the following are not uncommon:—

"Let *each* esteem other better than *themselves*." Phil. ii. 3.

"*Every* nation made gods of *their* own." 2 Kings xvii. 29.

"*Every* nation in *their* cities." 2 Kings xvii. 29.

"*Every one* in the imagination of *their* evil heart." Jer. xi. 8.

"*Every* drove by *themselves*." Gen. xxxii. 16.

"If *ye* from *your* hearts forgive not *every one his* "*brother their* trespasses." Matt. xviii. 35.

The word "*both*" refers, if used properly, to two only, yet we read thus:—

"*Both* the top of it, and the sides thereof, and the "horns of it." Exodus xxxvii. 26.

"*Both* maids, and little children, and women." Ezek. ix. 6.

The word "*either*" means one of two; yet, in the following sentence, it refers to one of five:—

"He shall not leave thee *either* corn, or wine, or "oil, or kine, or flocks." Deut. xxviii. 51.

Here again, as in many other instances which I could name, the translators are *wholly* to blame for the error, seeing that the word "*either*," which they have inserted in this passage, has no corresponding word in the original to mislead them in their translation.

The substitution of "*if*" for "*whether*" is a very common error. It occurs in such passages as the following:—

"Who knoweth *if* He will return and repent?" Joel ii. 14.

"See *if* there be any wicked way in me." Psalm cxxxix. 24.

"Prove ME now herewith *if* I will not open you "the windows of Heaven." Mal. iii. 10.

"Pilate marvelled *if* HE were already dead." Mark xv. 44.

In each of the foregoing passages the word "*if*" should have been "*whether*;" and the reason for the change will be apparent to any person who considers the meaning of the word "*if*." It is, as you know, the Saxon "*gif*," from the verb "*gifan*," to give; and is equivalent to "*given*" or "*granted*." Now substi tute either of those words for the word "*if*" in any of the passages which I have quoted, and you will find that the passage fails to convey any definite meaning. But change the word to "*whether*," and the meaning is obvious.

It is remarkable that, in the last of the passages which I have quoted, there are both words, "*if*" and "*whether*." It reads thus:—

"Pilate marvelled *if* HE were" (it should be "*whether* HE *was*") "already dead; and, calling unto "him the centurion, he asked him *whether* HE had been "any while dead." Mark xv. 44.

An error in the tense of verbs is of frequent occurrence in the Bible. For instance,

"They, supposing HIM *to have been* in the company, "went a day's journey." Luke ii. 44.

But their going a day's journey was not in consequence of their supposing HIM *to have been* in the company; but in consequence of their supposing HIM *to be* in the company. Again,

"He hoped *to have seen* some miracle done by HIM." Luke xxiii. 8.

No, he did not. What he hoped for was *to see*

some miracle, not *to have seen* it. Hope here refers to the future, not to the past. The error re-occurs in this passage:—

"He hoped that money *should have been* given "him." Acts xxiv. 26.

Surely his hope was that money *would be* given him. Once more,

"The chief captain, fearing lest Paul *should have* "*been* pulled in pieces." Acts xxiii. 10.

Unquestionably the fear was not that Paul *would have been* pulled in pieces, but that he *would be* pulled in pieces. Lastly,

"They might have had opportunity *to have* "*returned.*" Heb. xi. 15.

Impossible. They might have had opportunity *to return*, but they could not have had opportunity *to have returned.*

As for the aspirate "*h*," I cannot understand what was thought of it by the translators of the Bible; their practice respecting it is so contradictory. In the same verse I find,

"*My* hand and *mine* hand." 1 Sam. xxiv. 11.

"*Thy* husband and *thine* husband." Num. v. 20.

"*Thy* heart and *thine* heart." 1 Sam. xiv. 17; 2 Kings x. 15; Ecc. xi. 9.

And, what is stranger still,

"*Thine* heart and *thy* eyes." Job xv. 12.

Then we have, "An half, an horse, an house, an "heap, an hook, an hoof, an hart, an hymn, an heifer, "an healer, an highway, an hissing, an habitation, an "hiding-place, an horrible thing, an hairy man, and "an husband!"

I might multiply the number of such passages a hundredfold; but I am sure that I have adduced

sufficient to convince any person that, notwithstanding *all* that Dr. Lowth and Lindley Murray have said, our present translation of the Scriptures can *not* safely be accepted as a model for correctness of expression. But though I say this, I fully admit the justness of Coleridge's remark that, "Intense study of the Bible "will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of "style."

Leaving now the sacred volume, the glorious truths of which will, I trust, be one day given us in more worthy language, let us turn our attention to the strange statements that one meets with in the daily press.

Was this a miracle?

"He rode to the village; and, on his arrival there, "he turned his horse into a stable."

What kind of crying is spoken of in the following sentence?

"The Dublin town-crier could not cry that day, "because his wife was dead."

What kind of pupils has the lady who, in her advertisement, says,

"She confidently appeals to the reputation for "teaching she bears?"

And what kind of beings were these?

"A public dinner was given to the inhabitants of "roast beef and plum-pudding."

A furrier lamenting, in an advertisement, the tricks played on the public by unprincipled men in his own trade,

"Earnestly requests ladies to bring to him their "skins, which he promises shall be converted into "muffs and boas."

Another advertisement ran thus:—

"Two sisters want washing."

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Here must have been a strange sight:—

"He rode to town, and drove twelve cows on "horseback."

A gentleman advertised for a horse

"For a lady of a dark colour, a good trotter, high "stepper, and having a long tail."

Another paper spoke of a horse which

"Ran away with a gig, threw out the driver and "cut a severe gash in one of his hind legs."

An American paper dilating upon the success attained by a self-made man, said,

"He arrived in California with only *one* shirt to his "back; and since then, has contrived, by close appli- "cation to business, to accumulate *over ten millions.*"

The following advertisement appeared in 'The Times':—

"A young lady, whose husband is shortly going "abroad, offers to another a home, with every com- "fort, luxury, and freedom. One fond of amusements "and liberal ideas preferred."

I should have thought that the young lady might have waited till her husband had actually gone abroad, before she thus publicly advertised for "*another*," to whom she offered "*every comfort, luxury, and freedom.*" But perhaps she wanted *another young lady*; and it is the advertiser's grammar that is at fault, and not her morals. Let us hope so.

Two gentlemen from New York, one of whom had been in California nearly a year, and the other had just arrived, were overheard in the following conversation. The new-comer, lamenting his condition, and especially his having been compelled to leave behind him two daughters, asked the other whether he had a family. "Yes," was the reply, "I have a wife and

"six children in New York, and I never saw one of "them." After this the two sat a few moments in silence which was at last broken by the interrogator saying, "Were you ever blind?" "Oh! no," replied the other. A further lapse of time, and then the interrogator resumed the subject. "Did I under- "stand you to say that you had a wife and six "children living in New York, and you had never "seen one of them?" "Yes, such is the fact." Here followed a still longer pause in the conversation, when the interrogator, fairly puzzled, said, "How can "it be that you never saw one of them?" "Why," was the answer, "one of them was born after I left." "Oh, ah!" and a general laugh followed.

Language, you see, may be perfectly correct, and yet may not convey to the hearer the true meaning of the speaker.

Here is another example; and, to those who have not previously met with it, it is even more bewildering than the former. To them I offer it as a puzzle which they can solve at their leisure; and with it I will conclude, merely adding that the sentence is strictly accurate as to language, and conveys an undeniable truth. It is this:—

"The son of Pharaoh's daughter was the daughter "of Pharaoh's son."

I repeat it, and emphasize the synonymous words in the sentence, that you may the more clearly see the true meaning.

"The son of *Pharaoh's daughter* was the *daughter* "*of Pharaoh's* son."

In my next paper I shall direct your attention to some amusing peculiarities of the English language.

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